

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-15

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-05 AID-05  
CA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /069 W  
-----042384 100325Z /64/73

R 090850Z SEP 77  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8520  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMCONSUL UDORN  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 1283

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y F O R T E X T

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4  
TAGS: SREF SHUM ECON LA TH  
SUBJECT: FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM LAOS

REF: A STATE 215732, B VIENTIANE 1241

SUMMARY: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT INCREASED REFUGEE FLOW  
FROM LAOS INTO THAILAND IN RECENT MONTHS MAY BE MORE OF  
A TEMPORARY HIGH POINT RATHER THAN AN INDICATION OF A  
LONG TERM TREND DUE TO SOME RELAXATION OF POLITICAL AND  
ECONOMIC RESTRICTIONS AND CONTROLS AND TO THE DECREASED  
RISK INVOLVED IN CROSSING THE MEKONG AT CURRENT HIGH  
WATER LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

GOVERNMENT POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS ON  
LAO POPULATION APPEAR TO HAVE RELAXED SOMEWHAT RECENTLY.  
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LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS (APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT)  
HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY ARE NO LONGER BEING REQUIRED TO  
FILE EXTENSIVE REPORTS ON STRANGERS VISITING THEIR  
NEIGHBORHOODS OR ON THE BACKGROUNDS OF VILLAGERS WHO  
FLEE TO THAILAND.

2. ONE NEIGHBOCHOOD LEADER SAID THAT WHILE IN THE PAST

ALL OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION FOR LAO CITIZENS HAD TO ORIGINATE FROM HIGHER LEVELS, SHE CAN NOW ORIGINATE SOME DOCUMENTATION ON HER OWN. SHE NOTED THAT STRICT CONKTROLS REQUIRING PAPERS FOR OPERATING VEHICLES AND RESIDENCE REGISTRATION HAVE ALSO BEEN RELAXED.

3. ONE LEADER REPORTED THE FOLLOWING REGARDING THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LAOS. LPRP CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NOUHAK PHOUMSAVANH REPORTEDLY VISITED HIS HOME PROVINCE OF SAVANNAKHET IN AUGUST AND CONFRONTED THE LOCAL PROVINCE CHIEF REGARD-  
ING THE "STRICT" MEASURES IN FORCE THERE. HE REPORTEDLY ASKED THE CHIEF, "DO YOU WANT LAND INSTEAD OF PEOPLE OR LAND WITH PEOPLE TO WORK ON IT?" LOCAL REPORTS SUGGEST THAT POLIKTICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS HAVE BEEN RELAXED IN SAVANNAKHET SINCE THE VISIT.

4. EMBASSY'S WEEKLY MARKET SURVEY NOTED SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED QUANTITIES OF FOOD AND OTHER MERCHANDISE IN THE VIENTIANE CITY MARKETS SEPTEMBER 1. PRICES WERE GENERALLY SIMILAR TO THE RELATIVELY HIGH PRICES OBSERVED IN JUNE. THE APPEARANCE OF FOOD AND FOOD SELLERS IN THE CITY MARKETS FOLLOWED BY ONLY FOUR DAYS PUBLICATION OF NEW DOMESTIC TRADE AND MARKETING GUIDE-  
LINES (REF B) WHICH CALLED FOR NATIONWIDE EMULATION OF VIENTIANE'S "SUCCESSFUL METHOD OF AGRICULTURE AND LIVE-  
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STOCK GOODS DISTRIBUTION." (AS NOTED REF B, THE "SUCCESSFUL METHODS" AMOUNTED TO A RETREAT FROM THE RIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT OF "SOCIALIST" TRADE AND MARKETING SYSTEM.)

5. LOCAL SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT IT IS EASIER TO CROSS THE MEKONG TO THAILAND WHEN THE RIVER IS HIGH (JUNE THROUGH OCTOBER) THAN WHEN IT IS LOW. THEY EXPLAIN THAT WHEN THE RIVER IS HIGH IT IS RELATIVELY EASY TO SLIP FROM THE BRUSH COVERED SHORE INTO THE RIVER UNDETECTED BY LAO BORDER GUARDS. WHEN THE RIVER IS LOW IT IS NECESSARY TO CROSS A BROAD EXPANSE OF OPEN BEACH TO REACH THE RIVER, THEREBY EXPOSING ONE-  
SELF TO LAO BORDER GUARD FIRE.

6. COMMENT: SOME RELAXATION IN STRICT LPDR CONTROLS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FOOD IN LOCAL MARKETS MAY FOR THE TIME BEING REDUCE INCENTIVES FOR LAO CITIZENS TO FLEE TO THAILAND.

7. RELAXATION OF SOME GOVERNMENT PRESSURES ON THE LAO POPULATION COINCIDES WITH GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO

MOBILIZE THE POPULATION IN REPLANTING OF RICE SEEDLINGS  
FOLLOWING THE ADVENT OF THE MONSOON. RESUMPTION OF  
STRICT LPDR CONTROLS WILL PRESUMABLY FOLLOW THE CON-  
CLUSION OF THE CURRENT MOBILIZATION DRIVE AND SUBSEQUENT  
RICE HARVESTING.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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